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FROM

FM AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ

CONTROLS

UNCLAS CIUDAD JUAREZ 000372

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA, INL, DRL, USAID

EMBASSY FOR FO, POL, ECON, NAS, USAID, PAO

E.O. 13526: N/A

BODY

TAGS: PHUM, CJAN, CMGT, PGOV, ASEC, MX

SUBJECT: JUAREZ POLICE ACCUSED OF INVOLVEMENT IN DISAPPEARANCE OF FOUR MEN

1. (U) LESS THAN A MONTH AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT AS MUNICIPAL SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SECURITY FOR CIUDAD JUAREZ, RETIRED LT. COL. JULIAN LEYZAOLA PEREZ IS ALREADY FACING A CONTROVERSY INVOLVING HUMAN RIGHTS. THE MATTER INVOLVES THE DISAPPEARANCE OF FOUR MEN, JUAN CARLOS CHAVIRA, 28; DANTE CASTILLO, 25; RAUL NAVARRO, 29; AND FELIX VIZCARRA, 22. ACCORDING TO WITNESSES, ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 26, THE TRUCK THE MEN WERE RIDING IN WAS STOPPED BY MUNICIPAL POLICE AND THE MEN WERE ARRESTED. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SEEN SINCE.
2. (U) WITNESSES GOT THE UNIT NUMBERS OF THE POLICE CARS INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT, TWO OF WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE CARS USUALLY DRIVEN BY LEYZAOLAS BODYGUARDS. SOME OF THE PURPORTED POLICE ALSO WORE CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORMS LIKE THOSE OF THE ELITE GRUPO DELTA UNIT THAT SUPPLIES BODYGUARDS FOR LEYZAOLA. THE POLICE ARE DENYING THAT THEY ARRESTED ANYONE MATCHING THE MENS DESCRIPTION.
3. (U) SHORTLY AFTER THE MENS FAMILIES FILED COMPLAINTS OVER THEIR DISAPPEARANCE, LEYZAOLA ROUNDED UP THE 18 OFFICERS USUALLY ASSIGNED TO THE POLICE CARS IN QUESTION AND PRESENTED THEM TO THE WITNESSES, SAYING THAT NONE OF THE OFFICERS YET HAD HIS FULL CONFIDENCE AS HE WAS NEW AND DID NOT KNOW THEIR BACKGROUNDS. THE WITNESSES DID NOT RECOGNIZE ANY OF THE OFFICERS; HOWEVER THE INCIDENT OCCURRED BETWEEN 7:00 -7:30 PM WHEN LIGHT WAS FADING.
4. (U) THE CITY ISSUED A STATEMENT OVER THE WEEKEND SAYING LOCAL

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Steve Blodgett, Senior Reviewer

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POLICE DID NOT PICK THE MEN UP AND ARE NOT HOLDING THEM, AND JUAREZ MAYOR HECTOR MURGUIA PUBLICLY ORDERED HIS STAFF TO INVESTIGATE. A POLICE SPOKESMAN ALSO SAID THE DEPARTMENT WAS CONDUCTING ITS OWN INVESTIGATION AND WOULD COOPERATE IN ANY OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION OF THE DISAPPEARANCES. NONETHELESS, FEW CLUES HAVE EMERGED SO FAR AS TO WHAT REALLY TOOK PLACE.

5. (U) RESPONSIBILITY FOR INVESTIGATING INSTANCES OF MUNICIPAL POLICE MISCONDUCT FALLS TO STATE PROSECUTORS. ON APRIL 4, THE STATE FISCALIA CONDUCTED FIVE HOURS OF INTERVIEWS WITH THE 18 OFFICERS LINKED TO THE POLICE CARS IN QUESTION. THE OFFICERS ARRIVED ACCOMPANIED BY MOST OF THE REST OF THE GRUPO DELTA UNIT WHO REPORTEDLY CAME TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THEIR COLLEAGUES.

6. (U) IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FOUR MEN, THE FAMILIES HAVE REQUESTED ASSISTANCE FROM THE STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE WASHINGTON-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. LEYZAOLA IMMEDIATELY BECAME THE FOCUS OF THE INVESTIGATION AS A RESULT HIS REPUTATION FOR CONDONING TORTURE WHILE HE WAS POLICE CHIEF IN TIJUANA. JOSE MIGUEL VIVANCO, HEAD OF THE AMERICAS DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH HAS CALLED FOR FEDERAL AUTHORITIES TO TAKE OVER THE INVESTIGATION. HE ALSO SAID LEYZAOLAS CHECKERED HISTORY CASTS DOUBT ON THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP HE CAN PROVIDE JUAREZ'S TROUBLED POLICE FORCES AND ON HIS ABILITY TO BRING ABOUT REFORM.

7. (SBU) COMMENT. WHILE PUBLIC SUSPICION CENTERS ON LEYZAOLA, THERE IS AS YET LITTLE EVIDENCE OF HIS DIRECT INVOLVEMENT, AND HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ARE THOSE ONE WOULD EXPECT OF A SECURITY CHIEF FOCUSED ON FINDING OUT THE TRUTH. THE SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE COMMONLY ACKNOWLEDGED CORRUPTION WITHIN THE MUNICIPAL POLICE FORCES AND THE MANY INTERESTS THAT MAY NOT WISH TO SEE LEYZAOLA SUCCEED EITHER IN CLEANING UP THE POLICE DEPARTMENT OR IN TAKING ON ORGANIZED CRIME. AN IMPARTIAL AND COMPETENT INVESTIGATION IS CLEARLY NEEDED, WHETHER IT IS DONE AT THE STATE OR FEDERAL LEVEL. END COMMENT.

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